

John Brice II House (Jennings House)
195 Prince George's Street
Annapolis
Anne Arundel county
Maryland

MD-282

HABS
MD,
2-ANNA,
14-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

HABS
MD,
2-ANNA,
14-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
JOHN BRICE II HOUSE
(JENNINGS HOUSE)

HABS No. MD-282

Location: 195 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County,
Maryland

Significance: An attractive mid-Eighteenth century house, largely preserved,
with numerous details of interest.

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Built in the historic area of Annapolis within close proximity of such houses as the William Paca House and Sands House, the Jennings House is an interesting example of mid-Eighteenth century Annapolis domestic architecture. Although the exterior has had many nineteenth century additions, the basic fabric has remained unaltered and the interior retains many original features.
2. Condition of the fabric: As of 1964, basic structure appeared sound, with the finish in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-and-one-half story house has a five-bay front and is approximately 35' x 45' on a rectangular plan.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of stone below grade, and brick about three feet high above grade. The brick foundations are laid in Flemish bond with a plain water table.
3. Wall construction: Walls are brick, laid in Flemish bond. Bricks are large in size---2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8" - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The exterior walls have been painted, but portions of the rear wall show the colors of the material to vary from light buff to dark brown and dark purple.
4. Structural system, framing: The exterior walls, and basement partitions, are of load-bearing brick construction; floors, roof and partitions are of frame. Some partitions are vertical boarding, others are plastered vertical boarding. The timbers throughout are hewn, and jointed with pegs holding in the tenons. The first-floor joists are 3" x 9", 16" on centers. The attic floor joists are 3" x 6". The roof rafters, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 20" on centers, are lapped and pegged without ridgepole.

5. Porches: The square wooden porch at the center of the main facade apparently dates from the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Its supports are pairs of square columns with chamfered corners, simple bases and crude capitals. At the center of the rear facade is a sandstone stoop (5 steps). Two bulkheads give access to the basement.
6. Chimneys: There is a pair of large brick chimneys on each gambrel end with corbeled caps.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front doorway is set within the columned porch; a wide wooden architrave with two fascias is set inside the brick opening, under a segmental arch. There is a four-light transom above a molded transom bar. The transom bar has a delicate cornice which returns against the jambs. The door has six molded panels with raised fields.
 - b. Windows: The window openings are segmentally arched. Those on the rear retain double-hung sashes with heavy muntins, nine lights over nine lights. Plain trim is set inside the masonry openings; the sills are molded wood. The louvered shutters appear to be relatively modern.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof is a gambrel, originally shingled but now covered with sheet metal. The shingles can be seen from the attic; they are 20" long, exposed 7", and nailed to spaced narrow boards.
 - b. Cornice: There is a strongly projected wooden cornice with bed moldings. A modern sheet metal gutter hangs over the upper moldings.
 - c. Dormers: There are three dormers in front and two in the rear; they are hipped with double-hung sashes, six lights over six lights.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Basement: In the northwest front room of the basement, is an enormous kitchen fireplace with oven alongside. The other chimneys have arched void spaces in the center. Two bulkhead stairs, one at the east corner, the other near the center of the rear wall, give access to the outside. Floors originally appear to have been earth, except for the brick-paved kitchen. The ceiling appears to have been formed by plastering between joists, on split lath nailed to the floor boards. This plaster is of lime and sand, and quite soft. Most of the basement now has a modern ceiling at the bottom of the joists.

2. First floor:

- a. Stairways: The stairway is apparently the original one; it is a dog-leg stair consisting of 13 risers to the landing and 10 more to the second floor. Below the landing, the stair is enclosed between the front wall and a partition of plain vertical boards. The upper portion has a closed string with a simple square post, molded handrail and turned balusters. The railing at the second floor, and one across the front window, are similar. The treads and risers are of yellow pine. A simple stair to the basement lies beneath the lower flight of the main stair. Part of the stair appears original, but the lower portion has apparently been replaced; the treads are housed in plank strings, without risers. Between the southeast chimneys are "secret" stairs, now partially blocked, from basement to first floor, and the second floor.
- b. Flooring: The floors are of yellow pine boards, $5\frac{1}{2}$ " to 8" in width.
- c. Wall and ceiling finish: The ceilings are plastered. The walls are papered over plaster, and in some places are papered over vertical beaded boards. The walls of the principal room are entirely paneled in wood, which is relatively rare in Annapolis. The southeast rooms have plaster cornices of a late 19th Century type; the hall and principal room retain wood cornices which appear original.
- d. Doorways and doors: The doorways of the hall and principal room have simple architrave trim with a single fascia; they appear original. Openings in the southeast rooms have architrave trim of a type popular c. 1870; this includes a wide opening between the two rooms, which is probably an alteration. The doors are 6-panel, the central tier of panels are square, those above and below vertical. Panels are molded and have high raised panels on one side. These $1\frac{3}{8}$ " thick doors appear to be original but their hardware does not.
- e. Hallway: The walls of the hall have a plain wood base and a chair rail consisting of a board 11" wide beaded on both edges, to which is attached a bolection moulding $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. The room cornice consists of a wide fascia beaded on the lower edge, a small cyma reversa and a cyma recta.
- f. Principal room: The walls have a paneled wood wainscot and tall panels above it; the rail between is wide and carries a bolection moulding which serves as a chair rail. The door architraves are 6" wide and have two fascias. The trim of the two windows projects slightly, in the form of a stile, and extends to the floor below and the cornice above, the room cornice breaking out around them. There is a window seat, with a single panel below, and a panel between the window seat and

the stool. Above the head of the opening is a horizontal panel. The soffit and jambs of the window are paneled. The room cornice is large, consisting of cavetto, ovolo, corona, small cyma reversa and cyma recta. It is jointed near the center of each wall, except the one on which the windows are located. These joints are diagonal in plan, and staggered between the three sections of which form the cornice: bed mouldings, corona and cymatium. There are closets filling the area on each side of the chimney, so that the wall is plane. In each closet are wood hook strips (two tiers). Over the fireplace opening are two panels, the upper one being the greater in height. The fireplace itself has been altered, and the mantel shelf is an obvious addition. Except for these two details, everything else in the room appears original and is in generally good condition.

- g. Southeast rooms: The window openings retain the original window seats and adjacent paneling, which are similar to that in the principal room and hall, but later architrave mouldings have been applied to the trim. The mantelpieces of these two rooms are additions; the mantel in the rear room is marble, with an arched opening, of a mid-19th Century design.

3. Second floor:

- a. Stairways: A small stair winds between the southeast chimney, from the second floor to the attic.
- b. Flooring: The floors are of yellow pine boards 5" to 9" in width.
- c. Wall and ceiling finish: Surfaces are plastered (and papered) over split lathe of unusual width and thickness.
- d. Doorways and doors: The doorways are trimmed with a 3" wide piece of wood, beaded on the interior corner.
- e. Decorative features: Two rooms contain mantelpieces which appear to date from the 18th C.: The mantelpiece in the southeast front room has a simple wood architrave, plain frieze, and cornice crowned by a cavetto; the shelf is an addition. The mantelpiece in the northwest rear room has paneled pilaster strips, plain frieze, and cornice with dentils; the shelf is an addition. The mantelpiece in the southeast rear room dates from the late 19th Century with reeded pilaster strips and brackets.

JOHN BRICE II HOUSE
(JENNINGS HOUSE)

HABS No. MD-282 (page 5)

- f. Site: The house now occupies a relatively narrow inside lot, facing northeast on Prince George Street. A brick outbuilding is located behind the southeast part of the house. It is about 16 feet long, constructed of salmon brick 2" x 4" x 8" laid in American bond (headers every eighth course), apparently in the mid 19th Century.

Prepared by:
Eleni Silverman, HABS
from report by Harley J.
McKee, dated Sept. 1964
August 1983